



## Representative **Cheryl Pflug**



# 2001 Session End Report

**Rep. Cheryl Pflug**  
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1-800-562-6000

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Dear Friends,

I had planned to wait until we had all settled into our normal fall routines to give you a report on the 2001 legislative session. Obviously, in these days following the cruel attack on our country, life feels anything but normal. Sadly, while I continue working on transportation, I am also concerning myself with our local readiness to respond to acts of bio-terrorism.

I extend my most sincere condolences to those of you who have lost family or friends. My prayers are with those of you whose loved ones may now be called to defend our freedoms and our lives. Especially, I am grateful for and proud of those of you who, in the true spirit of "the free and the brave," rushed to volunteer, pray, give, love each other, and stand united as Americans. As we go about our lives in a changed world, it is that spirit which will sustain us.

Last January, the Legislature's essential responsibility was to write the biennial budgets for capital projects, the general fund and transportation. Along the way, we responded to an energy crisis, drought, earthquake, flattening economy, and striking teachers' and public employees' unions. How did we perform?

In my assessment, there were some bright spots: much-needed transportation reforms, strong support for education, and good crisis management. Some lines were drawn that needed to be drawn: protecting the firefighters' pension fund, respecting voter initiatives, and insisting that all citizens be allowed to bid equally on renovations to our state Capitol building. There were failures: the general fund budget is bloated and unsustainable while the transportation budget remains inadequate to relieve congestion.

Many thanks to those of you who have called or written to me. Your input is important, and that is why I have included my phone numbers and e-mail address in this newsletter. I appreciate the honor of serving you and I welcome your comments.

Sincerely,

Cheryl Pflug  
State Representative

## **Budget unsustainable**

We knew going into the legislative session in January that the operating budget would be tight. Voters in November had approved education spending and tax relief measures of nearly \$970 million, eliminating all surpluses. Tax revenues slowed due to a cooling economy. Health care and energy costs were rising substantially. State employees demanded pay raises. The state simply didn't have the money to meet all the demands.

As a member of the House Appropriations Committee, I worked on setting priorities in the budget and making decisions about where to direct our limited resources, just like families must do when planning their household budgets. Unfortunately, in the end, the Democrats walked away from the table and crafted their own budget which spends more than it will take in, including \$668 million in "one-time" money on ongoing programs.

I voted against this budget not only because it can't be sustained without a tax increase, but also because it did not maintain a responsible "rainy day" fund. Now the unforeseen has happened. The rainy day fund is inadequate and there's a growing likelihood of a tax increase in two years of as much as \$2.5 billion.

## **Transportation crawls forward**

Before adjourning, the Legislature approved a transportation budget that provides nearly \$263 million to finish important road projects in our legislative district. Included in that list is: construction of the I-90/Sunset interchange in Issaquah; widening of Highway 18 from Covington to the Issaquah/Hobart Road; construction of additional lanes on State Route 202 from East Lake Sammamish Parkway to Sahalee Way; new pavement on I-90 from Issaquah to North Bend; adding an HOV lane on State Route 900 in the Issaquah area; and additional lanes and signals on SR 169 in Maple Valley.

I worked hard for an additional package that would relieve traffic congestion throughout Puget Sound. To maximize the value of every dollar collected before seeking more taxes, we focused first on efficiencies. We were able to pass legislation that will not only cut costs, but improve the Department of Transportation's performance.

For example, a bill to streamline the permitting process saves both time and money without lowering environmental standards. We also approved a design-build measure, an agreement allowing the state to acquire rights-of-way for future projects while the land is still affordable, and took a small step toward competitive bidding. We were unable to get any progress toward reform of prevailing wage laws to more fairly reflect construction costs in different areas.

Even with these efficiencies, our transportation revenue is barely adequate to maintain the existing road system and finish projects that are under way. We do not have the funds needed to begin the very costly and necessary expansions to I-405, SR 167, and the 520 bridge.

However, I was willing to support tax increases only if there were guarantees that the money would be used for projects that would relieve traffic congestion.

I do not believe this is a problem which can be solved by throwing money around indiscriminately. Amazingly, after three special sessions, we were unable to get a majority to support a package that would realistically make your life better, and not just more expensive.

I continue to meet with other legislators and the governor on this issue in this interim. The impending recession is compounding the problem, however.



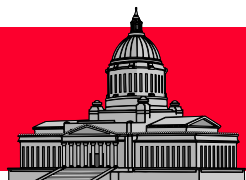
*Rep. Cheryl Pflug (middle) broke ground in June on the latest stage of the State Route 18 widening project near Maple Valley. Funding for this project came from a bill Rep. Pflug sponsored during her first term in office.*

## **Quality Education**

Our schools face a dire shortage of qualified teachers. To provide immediate relief, I supported legislation to allow retired teachers to be rehired without cutting their pensions. We honored voter-approved initiatives by providing full cost-of-living salary increases for teachers and picking up a larger portion of health benefit costs. Looking down the road, I sponsored legislation to consider regional housing allowances to help us retain teachers in high cost-of-living areas such as our own.

In addition to the voter initiatives, we boosted funding to the Better Schools program, providing \$87.5 million for class size reduction and extended learning purposes in grades K-4. We also allocated \$7.8 million for improved reading programs and \$2.8 million for focused assistance to help low-performing schools. Total: \$837 million in additional education spending.

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## Legislature steps up to help earthquake victims

The Nisqually earthquake which rocked Western Washington last February now seems like a distant memory following the recent tragedies on the East Coast. Although our state was fortunate that loss of life was minimal, the earthquake caused an estimated \$2 billion in damages.

I was in Bellevue and immediately traveled to the area between Fall City and Snoqualmie where a slide took out a large portion of Highway 202.

The quake also rocked the Capitol building in Olympia, causing large cracks in walls, knocking over bookshelves, and displacing large stones adjacent to the columns surrounding the outer structure of the dome. Damage to the Capitol was estimated at \$21 million. The building was closed and leadership offices, including my own, were moved across the street to the House and Senate office buildings. Our floor debate sessions were moved there as well.

We continued to conduct business, quickly passing a measure to provide \$4 million in relief money to earthquake victims. Many people had those relief checks in their hands within days.

When the governor wanted to exclude non-union contractors from bidding on the Capitol repair job by insisting on a "project labor agreement," we said NO. We felt using the earthquake disaster to grant political favors to unions that supported the governor was not an equitable way to fix the people's Capitol. With \$15 million in federal funds at stake, the governor lifted the union-only rule. The rule was also lifted for the planned \$90 million Capitol renovation project, which was already scheduled for next spring. Although the Legislature had planned to save money by doing the repairs and renovations concurrently, declining state revenues argue for postponing renovations until the economy improves.



## 'Ticket-to-Work' -- Helping people become independent

Many people with disabilities who want to work had a major roadblock in front of them. They stood to lose their Medicaid benefits if they became employed. This year, I was a prime sponsor of legislation to remove that roadblock, allowing incapacitated and disabled individuals to work and keep their benefits, paying for them on a sliding scale as their income increases. House Bill 2230, also known as the "Ticket-to-Work" bill, makes use of the federal Ticket-to-Work and Work Incentives Improvement Act enacted by Congress in 1999. That law gives states greater flexibility to states in removing barriers to employment for individuals with disabilities.

My bill, which was signed into law, will unlock the doors for many developmentally disabled people who want to begin working toward self-sufficiency.

## Pflug's child protection safety recall bill becomes law

In January, 9-month-old Riley Grassetth died in her Southwest Washington home after her head became stuck in the V-shape created by the collapsible sides of her portable crib. Riley's parents had borrowed the crib from another family. Neither family knew the manufacturer had recalled the crib in 1995.

It was such a heartbreaking case, and I didn't want to see other parents suffer the loss of a child because of an unsafe product they did not know had been recalled. That's why I sponsored legislation enabling the Department of Health to make information available to parents so that they

## At a glance

Here's a quick look at some other measures of interest sponsored by Rep Pflug that were approved by the Legislature and signed into law:

**HB 1287** - Preserves the telephone flat rate by extending the prohibition for three years on mandatory local measured service so that customers are not required to pay for local phone calls on a per call basis.

**HB 1364** - Ensures benefits are paid for children and disabled people who require anesthesia when dental services are performed in a hospital.

**HB 1426** - Establishes a quality improvement program to help boarding homes and their long-term care residents.

## 2002 Previews

Obviously, the budget and transportation will be among the key items of discussion during the 2002 session, which convenes in January. I plan to make another try at two bills I prime-sponsored this year, which stalled in committee:

- House Bill 1402 - Would create a state “no-call list” for telemarketers. The bill would give people the right to opt out of receiving sales calls throughout the day in their homes. This is a way to give people back their peace and quiet in their own homes.
- House Bill 1688 - Promoting a cost-of-living housing supplement for teachers who teach in high-cost areas so they can afford to live where they teach.

## Keep in touch!

I want to be accessible to the people I serve. That’s why I am doing town halls across the district.

Anytime you have a question, a concern or an idea to share, I hope you will pick up the phone, write me a letter, or send me an e-mail. Many bills in the Legislature are the result of a citizen’s suggestion. Hearing from you helps me to best represent your interests.

Also, if you find you are getting the runaround from a state agency, maybe I can help. Drop me a line and explain the problem. I can’t promise to always get the answer you want out of government, but I am always ready to make the effort on your behalf.

## Join us for a town hall meeting!

Mark your calendar and be sure to join me and Rep. Glenn Anderson for one of several town hall meetings we have scheduled throughout the 5th District. Bring your questions, comments and ideas as we discuss state government and future legislation. All meetings begin at 7 p.m. sharp.

Thursday, Nov. 1  
Sammamish Library  
825 228th Ave. NE  
Sammamish

Wednesday, Nov. 7  
Snoqualmie Library  
38580 SE River St.  
Snoqualmie

Wednesday, Nov. 14  
Issaquah Library  
10 W. Sunset Way  
Issaquah

Wednesday, Nov. 28  
Maple Valley Library  
21844 248th Ave. SE  
Maple Valley

### Rep. Cheryl Pflug

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